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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000065

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: HASSAN AL-RASHID ON SECURITY, THE BASRAH GOVERNMENT AND THE
BOYCOTTS

REF: (A) BASRAH 53; (B) BASRAH 58; (C) BASRAH 59; (D) BASRAH 60

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CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, Regional Coordinator, REO Basrah,
Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) Summary: In a May 3 meeting with Badr Organization chief Hassan al-Rashid, the Regional Coordinator (RC) discussed the threats against the employees of the Regional Embassy Office (REO) in Basrah and suggested that splinter groups could be responsible. Hassan believes that the Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) soon may vote to remove Governor Muhammad, but a sticking point is a legal question over whether 26 or 28 BPC members' votes are needed to do so. Concerning the boycotts against the British and the Danes, Hassan said that they should be lifted in the very near future. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Hassan al-Rashid, the Basrah leader of Badr Organization and BPC member, met with the RC of the Basrah REO on May 3 and discussed the threats against the REO's local staff, a possible change in the governorship and the BPC's boycotts against the Danes and the British. The Deputy RC and Poloff also attended the meeting.

3. (C) The RC began by describing the threats made against the REO's local staff and showing Hassan a copy of a leaflet distributed outside the compound's main gate on April 30 that promised death to people working for the coalition. Hassan said he was aware of recent threats made against some of the REO's employees and sympathized with Post employees' plight. He said he believed that the threats did not emanate from a particular ideological group of Shia or Sunni Arabs, but were from people wanting to churn up the political situation. Many other groups and individuals have been threatened, according to Hassan, including Sheik Muhammad Falak, Ayatollah Sistani's representative in Zubair and a critic of Governor Muhammad, and BPC Chairman Obadi.

4. (C) When the RC asked him who was responsible for these threats, Hassan replied that he had received word that a former Badr member, Hayder Hassan Yusef, had been detained by the British military and had been complicit in some of these threats. Approximately 60 members of the Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) of the Basrah police, according to Hassan, are known for participating in assassinations and may have some connections to the threats. Hassan hastened to add that these groups do not direct their activities solely against the American and British forces, but act against anyone or any group that stands in their

way. These groups are not affiliated with any particular political party or structured organization, Hassan said, and countering them is a complex issue. He was not more specific about the groups who could be responsible for the threats.

15. (C) Hassan al-Rashid agreed that the key to improving security in Basrah is having a responsible local government and said that there should be a change in the Basrah government. Alluding to a plan for BPC members to vote to oust Governor Muhammad (see Reftels), Hassan said that although he believes the required two-thirds of the BPC members would vote to unseat the governor, there is not complete agreement, and some BPC members are afraid to vote against the governor.

16. (C) Hassan also said there was uncertainty of the meaning of Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 71 - whether two-thirds of the total number of council members must vote to unseat the governor or whether the governor and deputy governor would not vote. If the latter, 26 votes are necessary, but if the former, 28 votes would be required, according to Hassan. He said that clarity is needed on this issue and asked that the United States Government offer its opinion since the order originally was written in English. In any case, Hassan said that the security situation would improve if a new government were installed in Basrah. (Note: Section 2.5 of Order No. 71 allows dismissal of Governors and Deputy Governors for cause upon a two-thirds vote of the Governorate Council. Section 3.3 states that Governors and Deputy Governors may attend the regular meetings of the Governorate Councils as non-voting members. End Note.)

17. (C) Turning to the BPC's boycotts of the Danes and the British, Hassan said the BPC has decided to resolve them. However, Hassan emphasized, the boycotts must be ended in a way that explains to the average person why the boycotts began and what has occurred that permits the BPC to return to normal business with the Danes and the Brits. For this, Hassan said, the BPC decided there must be a media event.

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18. (C) Hassan described the boycott against the Danes as being "semi-solved," and the British boycott would require one more BPC meeting. The Deputy RC asked Hassan if any BPC members were against terminating the boycott, and he replied, "Yes," without providing much more information other than opaquely saying that the boycott started because a police officer associated with the Fadillah party was detained by the British military.

19. (C) Comment: Hassan put the threats against the REO's local staff in context by noting that unfortunately threats are common in Basrah against many different groups and individuals, including politically based threats against him personally. Hassan's solution, though never voiced clearly, is for the BPC to vote to remove the governor and install Hassan in the governor's chair. A new Basrah government, possibly with some change in the powers of the BPC chairman and the governor, would be able to improve security in Basrah in Hassan's view. He well may be correct - personal security has reached a nadir, and many people in Basrah hope that there will be a new administration to tackle the problem. Hassan's information on the imminent end of the boycotts against the Brits and the Danes jives with what the REO has heard - the Danish mission was told by the BPC on April 30 that the boycott is substantially over except for a media event to publicize it, and the UK consulate believes that the May 3 BPC meeting may set the stage for another meeting and media event on May 4 to lift the boycott against the British. End Comment.
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